

ADULT BIBLICAL EDUCATION SERIES

Vol. II, Book 4

The Period of Adjustment

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TEACHER'S GUIDE



On the covers of this series, you will find THE Sower in various stages of tending His fruit trees (us).

Vol. II, Books 1-4, picture the Sower watering His newly planted tree. Note the care that He takes to make sure it gets all it needs.

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Teacher's Supplement to Volume II, Book 4

THE PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT

(Joshua — I Samuel 2:11)

The introductory material for the teacher, containing guidelines, helps in preparing to teach the lesson, elements of a good lesson, etc., which was printed in the Teacher's Supplement for Volume II, Book 2, (pages 1-3) will not be repealed. You may wish to reread that material before beginning to teach this quarter of lessons.

This quarterly covers the content of four historical books of the Bible dealing with the first centuries of Israel's habitation of Canaan,

These Biblical Books trace Israel's history from the time of her entrance into Canaan after the death of Moses through the period of adjustment in which the people neglected God's Word and fell into sin, until God began to work in a few faithful families to bring them back to Him and to His Word.

Below we will give some help to the teacher in approaching each of the lessons of the quarter. Remember, the suggestions are based on the expectation that each student will have read the lesson material, so that the teacher can build on what the student has already read.

LESSON ONE

Introduction to the Lesson

In this lesson you will want to begin with the account of the death of Moses reminding them that these particular words were probably written by Joshua who was the second man whom God raised up to record His Word. Then, after Joshua, there were a succession of other prophets that would come from time to time, through whom God would speak His eternal message to His people. In this way, the Bible itself was compiled ultimately of the sixty-six Books over a long period of history.

Point One: *God continually renews His promises to His people.*

You should remind the class that from the time of Abraham God had promised to His people an inheritance. They were to receive the land of Canaan as the inheritance and dwelling place for the descendants of Abraham, his seed.

Point out that as this first inheritance began to fade, because of Israel's disobedience, and the land she controlled grew smaller and smaller until finally the people were driven away from the land, God began to promise them a new inheritance.

This new inheritance is particularly mentioned by Isaiah as a new heaven and a new earth after the present

heaven and earth are done away. You may refer to Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22-24.

In the New Testament Jesus speaks of a place to which He is going and from which He will return, to receive those who have believed in Him into a place He has prepared for them (John 14:1-3).

Point out that Peter speaks of an inheritance that is not corruptible and will not fade away, as the first inheritance of Israel did. He speaks of it as an inheritance in heaven reserved for every believer (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Point out to the class that God also continually gives promise of victory over our enemies. Remind them that in Genesis 3:15, this is part of the very first promise God made to fallen man who would trust in Him.

Show that even when the people sinned and fell before their enemies and went into captivity, God did not cease to promise them ultimate victory over their enemies.

Finally, you can show them how in Revelation 20 we have the ultimate picture of the overthrow of all the enemies of God and His people,

You will want to show them that God also continually reminds His people of His promise to be with them as He was with Moses. Point them to Isaiah 7:14, which is a promise of a birth of a child by a virgin whose very name will mean "*God with us*," and how in Matthew 1, the writer of that gospel shows that Jesus did come to fulfill that promise of Isaiah.

Again, you can point to the closing chapter of Matthew, in which Jesus in the Great Commission, again promises to be with His people forever.

Point Two: *God continually calls His people to renewed commitment to Him,*

You will wish to show in this point that Christians are called to meditate on God's Word as were Joshua and the people of his generation. You may wish to point to Psalm 1, which speaks of the righteous one who meditates on God's Word day and night, and who bears fruit to the glory of God. Another reference is Psalm 119:97-99, which assures that the believer, as he meditates on God's Word, will be wiser than his enemies and wiser even than his teachers.

In the New Testament, you may wish to remind them of Christ's own experience in the wilderness when tempted by Satan, and how, by His meditation on God's Word and ability to apply that Word to every part of His life, he was able to thwart the power of Satan.

A final passage you may wish to point to, showing the centrality of God's Word in the life of every believer, is 2

Peter 1:19. In that context, Peter, though having actually seen Jesus glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration, later, in this epistle, writes that far more important to him than that experience is the Word of God written which is a testimony more certain.

Point Three: *God, by the sacraments, continues to teach His people their need of Him.*

Show the class that as in the Old Testament, God continually reminded His people of great spiritual truths through the sacraments of circumcision and the Passover, so in the New Testament, He gives new sacraments and teaches the same great spiritual truths, which are fulfilled in the work of Christ. Show how in the Great Commission our Lord included the command to observe the sacrament of baptism in the name of the Triune God (Matt. 28:19-20). You may wish to point to Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3, and Galatians 3:27, as evidences of the regular practice of this sacrament in the church.

Finally, in Titus 3:5 you may note the spiritual truth that is to be taught by the sacrament of baptism.

In reference to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, again you may show them how in Matthew 26:17-30, the Lord instituted this sacrament and in Acts 2:42, we have evidence of the observance of the Lord's Supper by the early church as they continued in the hearing of God's Word and breaking of bread (the sacrament of the Lord's Supper) and in prayer.

Finally, you may refer them to 1 Corinthians 11:23ff, in which we are shown that Paul gave clear instructions to the churches on how to observe the Lord's Supper and what it was to mean for them in terms of spiritual significance.

Suggestions for discussion

Utilizing questions 1 through 4, you may wish to lead the class in a discussion of the church in the world today, including its goals, its enemies and its hopes.

By questions 5 through 8, you may lead the class in a discussion of the place of meditation in the life of the class members. Encourage them to share some experiences in meditation and its effect in their life.

Questions 9 through 11 may be used to stimulate a discussion on the interest of the class members in the sacraments as they are performed in the church. Give them opportunity to discuss the importance of these sacraments to them.

LESSON TWO

Introduction to the Lesson

Point out to the class that in this lesson, though we are studying Israel's history, we shall be desiring to gain some knowledge of lessons that the Lord teaches here for His church in all periods of history.

In accord with the basic outline of the lesson, we shall

see something of the warfare that God's people must carry out in the world, consider something of the resistance to the advancement of God's Kingdom in the world, and also some of the dangers within the church as it moves out into the world. Finally, we shall reflect on the ultimate victory that is assured the people of God, in spite of the many weaknesses in the church.

Point One: *God's people witness the full of mighty strongholds before their God.*

Remind the class of the promise to Abraham long before, when, in Genesis 22:17, He assured that the seed of Abraham would possess the gates of His enemies. We can see in the Book of Joshua the fulfilling of this promise.

Just as Joshua and the people of his day witnessed the downfall of many mighty fortified cities, so later God continued to give victory to His people, so long as they were faithful to Him. Particularly in the time of David, the kingdom of Israel was expanded to its greatest extremes, reaching from the borders of Egypt all the way to the borders of Mesopotamia.

You may wish to utilize Psalm 2, which expresses something of the hostility of the nations of the world against God and His people, and at the same time expresses God's determination to establish His Kingdom in the world and cause it to move out into the world.

Perhaps one of the clearest passages for understanding this great principle is Habakkuk 3:12-13. There, God is described as a mighty warrior who goes forth through the nations of the earth conquering on behalf of His people, casting down all the strongholds of Satan and destroying God's enemies.

Remember that Christ, in addressing the disciples, according to Matthew 16:18, declared that the very strongholds of hell could not resist the Kingdom of God.

And, in the closing words of Matthew, Jesus, the great Head of the church, commands His followers to move out into the world to every nation, claiming men for Jesus Christ.

It is quite appropriate that the last Book of the Bible, Revelation, gives to us a magnificent portrait of Christ heading His army, going out to conquer the nations and bring down all the strongholds of Satan. We see this particularly in Revelation chapter 19.

Point Two: *The forces of Satan are united to resist the advancement of God's Kingdom in the world.*

You may wish to call the class's attention again to Psalm 2, where, in the opening verses, we read of the human determination to resist God in the world.

You may recall that a series of nations rose up, each one threatening the existence of Israel. There was first Syria, a smaller nation to the north, and then Assyria, a much greater nation. Then after that Babylon, and Greece and Rome all rose to great power. Much of this was in accord with Daniel's interpretation of a dream of

Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2, indicating that though these great nations would come one by one, none of them, in the end, would be able to withstand the Kingdom of God.

In the New Testament, certainly, we see something of the reality of Satan's warfare as Peter describes Satan as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

It is for this reason that Paul challenges the Ephesian Christians to take upon themselves the whole armor of God, because we cannot, by human strength, resist the wiles of Satan (Ephesians 6:13-17).

Revelation chapter 12 gives to us a vivid picture of the warfare that shall continue to the end of time, particularly, verses 13-17, which describe Satan as determined to fight against the church with all of his strength.

Point Three: *God's people are often hindered in their warfare by weaknesses within.*

Here, taking the material in the lesson book as your starting point, you can dwell particularly on two serious weaknesses in the church, *hypocrisy* and *compromise with the enemy*.

In reference to *hypocrisy*, you may wish to point out the case of Saul, who was clearly a hypocrite in that he simply wanted the form of religion, but in his heart was not committed to God. Saul, the king, was therefore, a great hindrance to the advancement of God's people in the world and had to be removed.

Later, Solomon, also, proved to be a hypocrite in many respects, in that, though he showed a strong outward form of religion in his younger years, later showed that his heart was really given to his wives and to their pagan gods.

In the New Testament you may use the example of the Pharisees, whom Jesus continually addressed as hypocrites because they outwardly pretended to be very pious but in their hearts lusted after evil continually.

Remind the people that God was just as severe in his judgment of hypocrisy in the New Testament as He was in the Old. A case in point is the judgment against Ananias and Sapphira, recorded in Acts 5.

These two were guilty of hypocrisy in the early church and were judged with death, just as Achan was, earlier. In both cases though God does not continue to put to death those who are, hypocrites, the fact that these records are in God's Word should be sufficient to warn every person how God feels about hypocrisy.

In reference to the sin of *compromise* with the enemy, you may wish to remind the class that it was just compromise which brought the sons of God into sin before the Flood and brought the destruction of the world.

You may also mention David and his willingness to compromise with sin in his working with sinful men and in his willingness to set aside God's Law to fulfill his own lust. That brought great sorrow to the whole people of Israel for a long time.

You might mention, too, Jehoshaphat a good king who, however, compromised with Ahab and Jezebel, the wicked

rulers of the Northern Kingdom, and who ultimately inter-married with them, bringing great sorrow and destruction to Judah in later history. You can refer to I Kings 22:44.

In the New Testament, no record is more vivid than the judgments of Christ against the seven churches of Asia Minor, recorded in Revelation 2 and 3. There, compromise with sinful people who infiltrated the church was the cause of God's harsh judgment against many of these individual churches.

Point Four: *In spite of strong enemies and weaknesses within the church, the remnant of God's people, the faithful ones, are assured of victory in the end.*

You could point to the experience of David, who, though admittedly a sinner, truly repented of his sin and held on to his faith in God. God promised him that ultimately (here would come from his seed the Christ, who would be victorious over his sins and the sins of all of his seed.

In Romans 8, we are assured that nothing can separate the people of God from His love. He knows His own, and as Jesus himself promised, not one of His own will fail or be lost.

Encourage the class, therefore, to take note of the sober warnings from this lesson, but at the same time, not to go away in despair, but to remember that our God is greater than all of our enemies, those outside and inside the church; and that such assurance warrants their own total commitment to a faithful warfare for Christ's sake.

Suggestions for discussion:

Utilizing questions 2 and 6, help the class discuss their awareness of the Christian warfare and the objectives of that warfare — what are we out to accomplish in the world for Christ?

You may wish to utilize questions 3 and 4 to lead a discussion on the threats of hypocrisy to their own church and the need for and place of discipline in the church.

LESSON THREE

Introduction to the Lesson

The primary emphasis in this lesson is on the lands which were conquered and inherited by Israel. Because the geography and history of Israel are so very important in our study of God's Word, it would be profitable to spend the whole time on the lesson in a review of the areas conquered by Israel and the settlement of the tribes.

The lesson, however, should not omit reference to other blessings which God gave to the people, such as, peace and rest from their enemies, and extra blessings associated with receiving the various cities and farming lands of Canaan.

Below is a suggestion of three major points you may wish to make in your instruction, which can be condensed considerably should you determine that the geography

lesson with the whole class is the more important emphasis for your class.

Point One: *God continues to give to His people a place in the world from which to witness.*

You may wish to point out how God expanded Israel's territory in the days of David to their greatest extent, reaching from the river of Egypt to the Mesopotamian area. Then later, even though they lost all of that land, God did give them a place of witness even in Babylonian captivity, and finally, returned them back to the land of Palestine, where they were once more established as God's people, with a territory of their own, though controlled by the Persians.

In the New Testament era, you can point out how Christ did not speak so much in terms of possessing lands, but in terms of going into all the nations of the world to lay claim to the peoples there for Christ.

Show that in the intent and purpose of God it is clear that to the end of this world God's people will have a place in the world and a continuing opportunity for witness.

Remind the class that we do not need to think in terms of a worldly inheritance, since God has promised an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled that will not fade away, reserved in heaven; and that it is *there* where our treasures are today. You may refer them to 1 Peter 1:4.

Point Two: *God promises to His people times of refreshing and rest.*

Point out to them that there is the pattern of God's giving to His people times of refreshing and reestablishing, throughout their history. You may note the day of Samuel, after the long and distressing period of the judges, or later the days of Solomon after the difficult days of David's combat and conquering. Again, even as the country was in decay, God gave them good kings from time to time, such as Hezekiah and Josiah, which were times of spiritual refreshing for the faithful in Israel.

Likewise, in the days after the captivity, Ezra and Nehemiah led the people once more into a time of refreshing and re-strengthening.

You may wish to point out that Jesus, in His earthly ministry, from time to time, took His disciples aside from their normal labors for times of rest and spiritual refreshing. And Jesus frequently spoke of His peace which He was giving to His disciples that would enable them to find rest and refreshment in the midst of the storms of life. Refer them to John 16:33.

Show, therefore, that the Lord does invite us to times of rest and refreshing in the midst of the battle, and that it is important for us to know that He expects us to enjoy these times, not simply as times of indulgence or idleness, but rather as times of re-strengthening ourselves for further combat in God's Kingdom.

Point Three: *God gives His people many blessings to use*

for His glory.

You can remind them that as God gave Israel many material blessings in the Old Testament, so, in the New Testament, He has promised to His church many spiritual blessings which we are expected to reinvest for His glory. You may point them to the *gifts* of the Spirit, as are listed in Romans 12:3-8, all of which gifts are to be utilized for service in His kingdom; or the fruits of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23, which, again are given not simply for our indulgence but to be invested in service in the Kingdom of God.

Suggestions for discussion

You may utilize questions 1 and 2, to examine the opportunities which you have as believers in the community where you live, to move out into that community with the Gospel. You may also wish to discuss ways in which the church to which you belong stands in danger of losing its place to serve God, by failure to use what opportunities she does have presently. Here you can utilize questions 3 through 6.

LESSON FOUR

Introduction to the Lesson

Point out to the class that this lesson will be dealing with the last days of Joshua and with words which were on his heart which he wished to share with the people before his death.

Remind the class that Israel was facing a time ahead with no one dominating leader. A time when the responsibility for leadership would fall on lesser persons than Moses and Joshua, and, therefore, the responsibility would fall more on the shoulders of the people than it had before.

You may wish to develop the lesson in the following manner.

Point One: *Recommitment to God's Word is necessary in the work of the church.*

Remind them of how God led Abraham to a recommitment and dedication of his life after he had stumbled badly in the affair with Ishmael. You could refer to Genesis 17, and God's call to Abraham to renew his commitment to be perfect as he walked with the Lord.

Elijah, later, as a prophet, had to learn that what was needed in his day was not great miracles and fire from heaven, but hearts that were changed, turned back to God, by the Word of God preached.

It was Zechariah who bore the message that God's work is done, not by might and not by power, but by His Spirit. Thus, again, rededication and commitment to the Word of God is necessary.

Remind them of how after the return from exile, both Ezra and Nehemiah stressed the importance of God's Word in the life of the people, and that from that time they became the people of the Book.

In the New Testament, you may show how Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, particularly in Matthew 5, began his earthly ministry by stressing the importance and the place of God's Word in the life of all the people — a Word that would not pass away and that all men would be judged by.

For this reason, Paul frequently urges Timothy to a recommitment to the Word of God. As an example of this, you may point to 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Challenge the class on the basis of this point — though they may have determined at many other times to be faithful students of God's Word and failed — nevertheless, to rededicate themselves to that task.

Point Two: *Rededication to serve the Lord is necessary in the work of the church.*

You could point to the experience of Jacob who, after twenty years with Laban in a pagan land, was called of God to get rid of the idols in his family and to be recommitted to God to serve Him (Genesis 35:2).

You could also point to the experience of Israel as they were led by Joshua to renew the sacraments of circumcision and the Passover feast as a means of rededicating themselves to serve the Lord as they prepared to enter the land of promise.

Samuel's leadership of Israel was an excellent example of what is necessary in rededication. You could point them to 1 Samuel 7:1ff, where Samuel calls the people once more to repent of their sins and turn and trust in the Lord, and commit themselves to serve Him only.

For this reason, in the New Testament epistles, Paul frequently exhorts the churches and Timothy to rededicate themselves to God — to stir up the gifts that God has given them for service.

Make the class aware that such rededication and recommitment is necessary because of the old flesh that tends to hold us back and cause us to forget those moments of spiritual blessing when we had formerly given our hearts to serve the Lord.

Point Three: *Procrastination is always a threat to the church's work.*

Here, you may point to what happened to Israel after the death of Joshua, when the people became so involved in enjoying their inheritance that they put off teaching their children about God, and so, there resulted a whole generation that did not know Him.

You could show, too, that Saul, the king, was rejected as leader because he continually wished to procrastinate in spiritual matters, thinking other things were more important than worshipping God.

Remind them that in Proverbs there are many passages which rebuke laziness and commend diligence and effort in service in the Kingdom of God.

Show how Mordecai would not allow Esther to procrastinate and make excuses when her time had come

to defend the people of God, but insisted that she act at that time, without delay.

You could also point to the events after the return from exile, when under the leadership of Zerubbabel the people were supposed to rebuild the temple, but got busy with other things and neglected that, much to the dishonor of their God among the pagans. They had to be stirred to renew their efforts by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

You will certainly wish to point to Jesus' own teaching about procrastination as is found in Matthew 8:21-22, where He rebukes one who wants to bury his father before he begins to follow Jesus; and in Luke 14:16-20, where various people are rebuked for making excuses not to follow Jesus.

Make the class aware of the dangers of procrastination in the very works which God has given them to do in their particular church. Ask each one whether or not he has been guilty of procrastination in the jobs that he has been given to do in the church.

Point Four: *The greatest motivation for our service is always to remember what God has done for us.*

Here you may mention Jacob's own looking back over the twenty years experience with Laban in order that he should come to a realization of the great debt of love he owed his Lord for watching over him in the past, when he certainly did not, deserve it.

Note how Moses, in Deuteronomy in particular, carefully reviews the history of God's dealings with His people to stir them on to greater commitment and love for Him.

In the New Testament, we can note Stephen's defense before his accusers, as is recorded in Acts 7, in which he basically reviews the history of God's good dealing with His people, to show the people why they ought to have responded in a better way to His Son when He came.

Finally, you may mention Romans 12:1-2, which in essence, Paul's call to each believer to look back at what God has done for him and on that basis to surrender his body as a living sacrifice to the Lord.

Suggestions for discussion:

Using question one, lead the class in a discussion of ways in which we ought to be guarding God's Word.

Discuss the kinds of Christian service in which members of this class ought to be engaged, making reference to questions 2, 3, 4, 5.

Have the class consider together ways in which the church to which they belong may have procrastinated in its obligation to the Lord in this community.

LESSON FIVE

Introduction to the Lesson

You should point out, to begin with, that this study

introduces a new era in Israel's history following the period of initial revelation by God to Israel, through Moses and Joshua.

Help them to see that over the next few hundred years, at least until the time of Samuel, the people would not receive any new revelations of God, but would to live in accord with what God had already revealed to them in the Law and in the Book of Joshua.

You must also show them that one of the sad lessons of the Book of Judges is the lesson of how far short the people fell of living up to what God had called them to do.

Point One: *Each generation of believers is responsible for preparing the next generation to serve God faithfully,*

Under this point you may wish to begin with the case of Abraham, who was instructed by God that it was his responsibility to teach his children to obey God and do righteousness and justice (Gen. 18:19).

You may also mention the example of the generation that came out of Egypt and failed God so miserably that they had to be eliminated. In that case, God Himself prepared the next generation to go into Canaan and live there for God's glory.

Deuteronomy 6:4ff., of course, is a favorite passage for pointing out parental duty, and we see that Joshua understood this responsibility and called all Israel to follow his example (Josh. 24:15).

Show them that one of the main points of the experience of Elijah with the Baal worshippers, and then later God's revelation to him at Mt. Sinai, was to teach him the importance of the prophetic ministry in preparing future generations to serve God more faithfully.

We have already mentioned Jesus and His careful work with the disciples preparing them to live for Him after His death, and likewise, Paul's careful preparation of Timothy and Titus to serve God when he was gone.

Before leaving this point, be certain that the people examine their own hearts in regard to their sense of responsibility in preparing their children and the younger people in the church for service after they have gone.

Point Two: *Generations not adequately prepared to serve Christ degenerate spiritually.*

Of course, here, the starting point may well be the Judges' era which we are about to launch into.

In the post-exilic period the people were strong spiritually under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, but it is evident that before a half-century had passed, by the time of Malachi, they were already a degenerate people, obviously not adequately prepared.

The same can be shown in the New Testament in that the latter part of the First Century of the church, the time of the seven churches of Asia Minor, mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3, was a time giving evidence of serious spiritual decay.

Be certain that the class, again, considers their own generation and whether or not today the sad plight spiritually in many denominations and local churches is due to neglect by those who did not adequately prepare this generation to know and serve the Lord.

Point Three: *Spiritually depraved churches go through periods of dark ages while God prepares future generations for revival.*

You may remind them of what we have seen in the case of Jacob and his sons, who were woefully deficient spiritually as they began to settle down in Canaan, but who were, later, revived by the grace of God, only after they had gone through extremely difficult times.

The wilderness experience of forty years wandering is another case where one generation went through hard times, bringing death to most of them, while God prepared another generation to be revived.

The period of the Judges will likewise show the same things, and you can help them anticipate this.

For this reason, Elijah, Jeremiah and many of the other prophets had to minister to a people in extremely dark times spiritually, while God prepared to raise up new generations to serve Him, after the exile.

The four hundred years of silence, from the end of Malachi until the New Testament era, is another period of darkness, so far as God's revelation to His people is concerned. It was a time of extreme adversity for the Jews until God began to stir them again through the preaching of John the Baptist.

Again, you may wish to mention the end of the First Century and the clear evidence that by that time, as the apostles were dying out, the church was already plunging into spiritual darkness in many places.

Remind them that in the Middle Ages, for nearly a thousand years, the church was in a time of spiritual decay until the Reformation.

More recently, the era of liberalism was ushered in, in the 1800's and is still having its effect in America, where large segments of the church population have little or no real instruction in the Word of God.

Suggestions for discussion

You may wish to utilize questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 to lead the class in a discussion of how your church is preparing the generation that follows to be leaders in the church and teachers of the Word of God and examples for their generation and those that follow them. This is such an important subject for discussion that it may be the only point you will wish to discuss.

Should you desire, you may also utilize question 8 to discuss the present plight of the church in the world, and how that may relate to past failures and what can presently be done about it.

LESSON SIX

Introduction to the Lesson

Point out, to begin with, the importance of the pattern of cycles that is to be seen in this series of studies. Impress upon the class the sequence of the cycle, moving from the sin of the people to the wrath of God, to the crying out of the people for help, to God's raising them up help, and then their plunging again into that cycle by sin.

Help the class to see that such a cycle is typical of the history of Israel and of the church since the time of Christ. It is important, however, to point out that such cycles in the history of the church do not simply involve man in an endless pursuit, but involve an interaction between God and His church, in which God is as active as man, God always bringing the church from the tendency to destroy itself back into a right relationship with Himself.

Point One: *When God's people disobey His Word, the alternatives for them are always unpleasant.*

You may wish to recall for them some of the details of bloodshed and domination over Israel that are given to us in this section of Scripture.

Remind them that Abraham, when he refused to wait for God, was faced with very unpleasant alternatives, having finally to send away his beloved son, Ishmael.

In the time of David, when he departed from God's Word, he was faced with unpleasant alternatives, which resulted in the death of the child by Bathsheba and the spiritual deterioration of his own family in large measure.

The latter history of Judah, in the time of the great prophets, Habakkuk and Jeremiah, is illustrative of this point. The people had so long disobeyed God that there was no pleasant alternative for them. They had to be taken into captivity, and the great prophets of God would have to suffer along with the wicked people in the time of Babylonian captivity.

Stress here that very often, when the church today is laced with unpleasant alternatives, it is because the people have departed from the Word of God, and so, in order to be reconciled with God again, must go through painful times of correction and readjustment.

Remind them of Hebrews 12:4ff. in which the writer shows us that all such chastening is unpleasant, and yet God has His good purpose in it. He is treating us like His children, rather than casting us off and denying us. And while His requirements for us may be unpleasant at the time, in the end He has intended good.

Point Two: *When men refuse to do their duty in the church, the church suffers.*

Here you may begin with the example of Adam and Eve. We have seen how Adam miserably failed to lead spiritually; and thus, mankind was plunged into spiritual death.

Israel, later in its spiritual decay, came into hard times, largely because of false prophets, false priests and false

kings, who refused to do the duty that God had given them, and left the nation without any strong and true leadership.

Another example is the evident spiritual crisis that had developed in Malachi's day. When, once again, the priests were failing to lead the people and teach them God's Word, and this was bringing on a time of chaos that plunged the church into another period of dark ages until Christ came.

You may wish to refer to Paul's words in I Timothy 2:12, in which he shows that it has never been God's intent that women should take over the spiritual leadership in the church. It is a responsibility of men. When men fail to fulfill that responsibility, it can only bring sorrow.

To bring this up to date, you might wish to speak in regard to the officers elected by your church and the importance that they fulfill their functions and set an example for all of God's people. If they fail or leave it to others, then it can only bring sorrow to the church.

Point three: *When men have refused their responsibility, God has, at times, raised up women to do that job.*

Here you may, again, begin with the example of Adam and Eve. When Adam failed, God promised to save their seed by the seed of the woman. God emphasizes this strongly in Genesis 3:15.

Deborah is one example of God's raising up a woman when men refused to do their duty. We can be thankful for Deborah, but we must not assume that this opens the door for women to be spiritual leaders in the church.

Later, as we shall see in the time of Hannah and Naomi, again, men, for the most part, were failing to serve God, as was Eli, the priest. In such times, again, God worked through godly women to get His purpose accomplished.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is another example in the New Testament. In a time when the Pharisees, priests and other leaders of the church had deserted their obligations to God's people, God reached down to this godly woman to solve mankind's greatest problems through Christ.

Again, you may wish to point to I Timothy 2:12, which clearly shows that it is not the norm for women to be leaders in the church. They have great supportive responsibility, but they cannot support when the leaders are unwilling to serve.

Suggestions for discussion

You may wish to utilize question 1 to discuss with the class the pattern of cycles that have been at work in the church's history since the time of the New Testament. This will require some knowledge of church history, but its lesson should be rather obvious in the rise and fall of various denominations and mission works throughout the history of the church.

It would be profitable to lead the class in a discussion

of the problems that arise out of men's failure to
duly. Here you can find help with questions 2, 3, 4 and 5.

LESSON SEVEN

Introduction to the Lesson

You will need to remind the class what these times were like when the Midianites were invading Israel like a plague of locusts, plundering their fields and taking their cattle. The Midianites were wreaking havoc on Israel and the people seemed to be helpless. It was part of God's punishing them for their disobedience to Him.

Let the class understand that you will be dealing with the complex personality of Gideon, which reflects much of the complexity of the spiritual condition in Israel because of her failure time and again to walk a consistent life to God's glory.

Point One: *God is able to use weak and fallible vessels to accomplish His purpose in the church.*

You could begin by showing how the Bible never covers up the weaknesses of those about whom It writes, even though many of them were faithful believers in the Lord. Jacob is an example. Most of what we see in the Bible about Jacob shows his failures and weaknesses, yet, God could and did use him. Jacob's sons are another example, and we have seen how God took them, looking so unpromising, and made of them men of faith.

Moses' own response to God in the wilderness at the burning bush is a good indication of how all God's children should realize that they are indeed weak vessels and not promising, in and of themselves, as leaders of God's people.

Thus, God used Gideon, though a complex and inconsistent person. He used him because Gideon had faith, and this is the one quality God requires of every one whom He will use in His church.

Later, we see how the prophets speak often of the weak and seemingly helpless remnant of faithful believers who were overwhelmed and outnumbered; and yet, all of the hope of the future for Israel rested just in that remnant and what God would do through them.

In a similar way, we see Christ going about in His earthly ministry choosing as his followers very weak instruments. They were not picked because of their strong points, from the human perspective, but *in spite of* their many weaknesses. Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, reminds all Christians that as they look around they must acknowledge their own and the weaknesses also of those with them in service in God's Kingdom.

Help the class to see that God is not approving of our weaknesses, but showing us, through all of this, that in spite of our many failures, if we have faith in Him, He will use us. Faith is that quality He requires. We cannot, therefore, use our weaknesses as an excuse for not serving God.

Point Two: *To demand signs above God's Word is not an evidence of faith.*

You should begin by reminding them of what a sign is. A sign, or requiring signs, is to lay conditions before God: to say that if such and such a thing happens, then I will know that it's God's will for me to do this or that. Such a sign tempts God, and it is not glorifying to Him, for it means that we are not willing to walk by faith and we are not willing to accept what His Word has told us, as our only infallible rule and guide for our practice and life.

Show them that the case is not the same with Gideon as it was with Moses. Remember that Moses was called when there was no written Word of God. He had no Word to follow. At that time God gave certain signs to Moses to reassure him not just of his being called by God, but also to assure him that the people would believe and know that he was sent by God. We have already discussed the miracles and their place in Scripture.

Point out to them what Christ has to say about signs in Matthew 12:39, where He denounces those who seek signs as a wicked and adulterous generation.

You may also show what Paul says about signs in 1 Corinthians 1:22. He finds the Jews at fault because they keep on demanding signs and are not willing to trust in Christ.

Show them that the Bible makes clear that followers and seekers of signs are in danger of being greatly deceived. Jesus, in Matthew 24:24, warns that many false prophets and deceivers will perform great signs. And Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, shows that the man of sin to come toward the end of the ages will be a man who will be able to deceive many by his working of signs.

Conclude by reiterating that God calls us to walk by faith, which is different from walking by sight or by signs, and point them to 2 Corinthians 5:7.

Point Three: *If our walk in an inconsistent walk, not always by faith, we leave a legacy of confusion for those who follow us.*

Beginning with Gideon's age and the confusion that followed, you may also point to the time of Solomon. He, like Gideon, was very inconsistent and therefore, the ages that followed him were thrown into utter confusion. Israel was divided and never again did it have the strength and glory of David's days.

You can show, too, that all evidence is that in Malachi's age, again, the people were living inconsistently, not walking by faith. And this threw Israel into some 400 years of confusion which preceded the time of the New Testament revelation.

You may also wish to note that in the age after the Apostolic Age, beginning in the second century of the history of the New Testament church, much confusion came into the theology, teachings and decisions of the church, due to great inconsistencies in the leaders and the

intertwining of Greek philosophy with Biblical truth.

Help the class to see that we, today, face a grave responsibility. We are expected to walk consistently and by faith. If we fail to do this, then those who follow us, our children, and the younger people in the church, will surely be confused, and great harm will be done to the church because of our inconsistencies.

Suggestions for discussion

Discuss the strong points of Gideon, and how we may learn to use what we have today for the glory of Christ. You could utilize the first four questions in this discussion.

You may also discuss the weak points of Gideon, for instance, his need for signs and his inability to be consistent as a man of faith, and how such weaknesses can harm the church even today. You could consider how the cry for signs is widespread in the world today, and how many are gaining great following by claiming to be able to work signs and miracles. Bear down on the importance of our living a consistent walk of faith. Utilize questions 5 and 6.

LESSON EIGHT

Introduction to the Lesson

It is important, as you undertake to deal with this lesson, to remind the class that God is showing us how bad things could get in the church. We see the spiritual situation in Israel deteriorate even further in the time of Jephthah's read of God's grief over His people and their continual stubbornness and sin, and His own determination for a time to withdraw from them, letting other nations overrun and overpower them.

Though the bulk of the lesson is not encouraging in itself, God can teach us many things through such experiences of Israel, as the church, from time to time through history, has gone through similar periods and may yet face even worse periods in years to come. Therefore, it is important to know what the Bible has to say and to see that in spite of the church in its worse days, God never really deserted His people and continually kept His eye upon them. This is important for us to remember today.

Point One: *The people of God may grieve Him by continual disobedience.*

Show how we learn from this lesson that at times God is grieved with His people to the point of allowing them to wallow in their own sin for a period of time, overrun by their enemies. It is not that God has forgotten His people; but at times, He chooses to leave them alone so that they can learn just how much they need Him. Scripture speaks of this as God's giving the people up to their sin.

We see how He dealt with the Israelites in the wilderness, giving up on one generation of Israelites and not allowing the people to enter until every one of them was dead. Nevertheless, this was not the same as God's giving up on His people, for if He has to dispense with one

generation, He will raise up another that will be faithful.

In Solomon's day you may wish to point to the way God gave up on Solomon and caused the Edomites and the Syrians to come in and greatly afflict Israel in those days. No longer was Israel superior over her enemies, yet, God did not give up on Israel. He did raise up other kings later that would lead His people faithfully.

The time of the Babylonian captivity was another occasion of God's giving up on that generation. We see that He simply let them go into captivity and suffer defeat at the hands of their enemies. Yet, God had not given up on Israel; for He preserved His people and brought them back in His own good time.

A good passage expressing the way in which God, at times, does give men over to sin is to be seen in Romans 1:24 ff., which leads to man's increasing sinfulness to the point where there is no hope in men at all. Yet, even there we see that God does not give up on man, for Paul goes on and shows that when man is at his worst, God, nevertheless, establishes and proclaims His way of salvation.

Another passage that you should use in this section is Romans 9:22 ff., which expresses the thought of how God is willing to suffer and endure evil men and evil times in the church for the sake of those whom He will save. It is important that we understand, then, history from God's perspective, and not simply give up because the times seem to be distressing.

Point Two: *Some in the church may do things in the name of religion which are not at all desired by God.*

Here you may wish to remind them of what Jephthah did in making his vow and carrying it out in the manner in which he did. All of this was out of accord with the revealed will of God.

You may wish to show them that Israel, throughout its history, frequently abused the sacrificial system and brought their sacrifices without any compliance with the kind of heart that God required in His worshippers. They offered the sacrifices, but God actually said that He had no desire for such sacrifices. You may find this in Isaiah the first chapter.

Saul is an example, also, of men, even leaders in the church, who would bring offerings and gifts to God which God simply did not want, which repelled God; as he did when he spared some of the best of the animals after defeating those enemies that God said he should destroy,

Manasseh, the king of Judah in its later history before the fall of Jerusalem, is an example of a king in Judah who actually sacrificed his son to a pagan god. We can read of this in 2 Kings 21:6.

Saul of Tarsus, in the New Testament, is another example of one who did many heinous crimes in the name of religion. He thought that he was doing right in serving God by persecuting and killing Christians, and had to be corrected from this terrible practice of religion by a confrontation with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.

Again, you will want to make this point positive by showing that the Lord has taught clearly in Scripture what He does expect of His own. And refer them to James 1:27, which describes the kind of religion and service that God does expect, so that we, and all of our church, ought constantly to be examining what we are doing to know whether it is really pleasing God or not, and seeking to know what does please him as we more diligently study his Word.

Point Three: *There are some in the church who may do things in the name of religion which needlessly divide and offend God's people.*

Here you will want to start with Jephthah's unwise dealing with the Ephraimites which resulted in the slaughter needlessly of thousands of the Ephraimites.

Another example is the contest between Saul and David, in which David, very wisely, would not lay one hand upon Saul to harm him, because he was God's anointed; whereas Saul, very unwisely, sought to deal with his enemies in the most treacherous ways, justifying it in the name of God, Saul was jealous; David was loving and patient. It is a good contrast of ways in which we can deal with problems, and even problem people in the church.

The example of Rehoboam, the grandson of David and son of Solomon, is a good one to show how leaders in the church may act extremely unwisely, following the of unlearned men rather than the counsel of God's Word. Rehoboam, needlessly, alienated most of the tribes of Israel and drove a wedge between the north and the south that was never healed.

You may wish, also to include in this the counsel of Paul to Timothy, as he dealt with people in the church; that he was to deal with the older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters. Commend to them this as a guideline for them in their dealing with fellow Christians in the church and as a guideline for the church itself in dealing with whatever problems arise among the people.

Suggestions for discussion

You may wish to lead a discussion on grieving the Lord (the Holy Spirit). You could base this on the passage in Ephesians 4:30ff. Here you could utilize questions 1 and 2. Help them to see what it is that grieves the Lord in the conduct of those who profess faith in Him.

You may wish to help the class discuss the Biblical teaching about vows. Within the lesson several verses have been given out of the Old Testament, which you could utilize. You may also want to relate this practice in the Old Testament times to our practice today of making promises to God, both in giving so much support to the church or in committing our lives to go serve Him as missionaries or ministers or in other full time professional religious callings. Help them to consider what promises to God are legitimate and what promises are not legitimate, and what we should do if we find that we have promised what we

ought never to have promised. Here you may wish to utilize questions 3 through 6.

LESSON NINE

Introduction to the Lesson

It would be important to call to the attention of the class that we are beginning now a study of Israel's history in the time of Philistine dominance. From the time of Samson down until the death of Saul, the Philistines dominated in Israel and plagued the Israelites considerably.

You should also point out that there is no evidence of a cry from the people for help from God. It would seem that the people had now lost all hope of bettering their situation. They were willing to live, with the Philistines in dominance.

Particularly, point out that this account of Samson gives insight into God's method of reviving Israel. God took the initiative and began to work through a family that was apparently more devout than most of the families in Israel in that day, the family of Manoah.

There is every evidence that Samson was brought up in a faithful home, and God blessed the young man as he became of age. When the time was right, God came upon him in His Spirit to guide him in his mission.

Point One: *Our strength, physical or spiritual, is a gift of God for use to His glory.*

You may call attention to previous evidence of this which we have seen in the account of the building of the tabernacle, when God endowed certain people with special gifts and talents enabling them to do the work that was required of them.

You may point, too, to the background preparation of Moses, who, for forty years, was trained up in all the learning of Egypt and then for another forty years, prepared in the wilderness to be the leader of God's people.

We have already seen how Gideon and Jephthah were men specially endowed with talents and abilities in military leadership.

So it was with Samson, a man of considerable strength which he received from God.

We may look at David's particular skills and see that as he was a shepherd boy, he was being prepared by God for leadership of the people of God and learning to trust in the Lord.

Ezra's preparation in the Word of God for the day when God would raise him up and use him to train the people in the Word of God is also an important example.

In the New Testament you will certainly wish to point to Romans 12:3-8 where Paul discusses the various gifts of the Spirit given to all children of God and emphasizes that each of those gifts is to be exercised for the glory and service of God.

Under this point challenge the people to examine their lives and see their strengths and to commit these particular

abilities they have for the use of God's people and for God's glory.

Point Two: *Our weakness (physical and spiritual) can be used by Satan to his advantage.*

Here you may wish to remind the class of Aaron, called by God to be a special servant in the priesthood of God's people. Nevertheless, Satan was able to use his weaknesses effectively in leading the people into sin more than once.

Even Moses, with his great strengths spiritually, had a crack in that strength through which Satan entered and which resulted in Moses' own failure before God and God's people, on one particular occasion.

You may wish to remind them of Joshua's weakness in compromise with the Gibeonites, and of previously studied judges, such as Gideon and Jephthah, who, though they accomplished many things for the Lord by the strength He gave them, nevertheless, through their weaknesses became tools of Satan at times.

Thus Samson, though he was a man with great strength, yet had serious spiritual weaknesses which Satan used to his own advantage.

Others in the Old Testament whom you may wish to mention are Saul, the man first chosen to be king, who because of his serious weaknesses was removed from the kingship; and David, who, though a far better king than Saul, nevertheless, had serious weaknesses which greatly affected his rule.

Solomon is particularly to be noted as one who showed such great strength and promise in his early days, and yet, ended up with a life in shipwreck spiritually.

In a general way, you can mention the fact that many of the prophets, priests and kings, all of whom were endowed with certain talents from God, misused those talents, some becoming false priests, false prophets and false kings.

In the New Testament you may wish to note Peter, who, though he had many admirable traits and strengths, yet had serious weaknesses which hindered his testimony on more than one occasion. Even Saul of Tarsus, who, though he was strong in his service to God, learned that he was not serving God at all. Even after Paul became a Christian, he learned that he had serious weaknesses which Satan could use to his advantage.

Call the attention of the class to 2 Corinthians 2:11, where Paul warns all Christians, "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Thus, Paul warns us all to be aware of our weaknesses and to seek to avoid them, lest we give advantage to Satan.

In this point you will wish to challenge the class to examine their strengths and weaknesses and to look to God for help in dealing with those weaknesses.

Point Three: *Our greatness is not in the gifts we have but*

in our readiness to live and die for God's glory and for the good of His people.

Here you may note first the example of Judah whose life was filled with serious spiritual weaknesses; yet, through it all he learned through humility to give his life to God and was willing to lay down his life for his brother.

Samson's greatness is seen only when he was ready to use his life and strength for God's glory.

Jonathan is a splendid example of one whose life did not amount to much as men evaluate lives, but which was truly to the glory of God as he was willing to lay aside his own claims to the throne in preference of David, who was God's choice. By this he gave glory to God and did what was good for his people.

Esther and Daniel, in the time of the Babylonian captivity, are good examples of people whose lives were laid on the line for God's glory and for His people.

In the New Testament we can mention Stephen, the first martyr of the church, who had little opportunity to serve God, yet who, by his death, served Him so faithfully. Of course, Paul is an example of one whose life was filled with hardships and whose greatness is seen in his willingness to live and die for Christ.

A good summary of Paul's own understanding of the importance of living and dying for Christ is to be seen in Romans 14:8, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Challenge the class, therefore, not to be puffed up in whatever talents and abilities they may have, as though the measure of their greatness will depend upon such abilities. Help them to see that far more important is their commitment to use what gifts and talents they have, and the life that God has given them, for God's glory and for the good of His people.

Suggestions for discussion

You may wish to lead the class in a discussion of the spiritual gifts among the members of your church, in the light of Romans 12, and how they may better use those gifts for God's glory and not for their own advantage. Here you may utilize questions 1,3, and 4.

You can also encourage the class members to examine their own weaknesses in private, and to discuss in the class how Satan can use all of our weaknesses to his advantage.

This is a subject which needs to be treated delicately and discreetly; nevertheless, it is important for the class to consider this together. Here you may be assisted by the use of question 5 in the discussion.

LESSON TEN

Introduction to the LESSON:

Point out to the class that this particular study in the ABES Teacher's Guide, Vol. II, Book 4 – page 11

Judges is a kind of summary study, not looking at any particular judge as we have in earlier lessons, but concentrating on the kind of life that was lived in that day; in other words, the background against which the various judges lived.

Prepare them for the fact that this was not a pretty picture, but that it is the kind of picture that can be expected when people have turned from God's Law. Point out to them that the objective of this lesson will be to see the kind of circumstances that can be expected to prevail when men, particularly in the church, turn their backs on God.

Point One: *When men disregard God's Law, lawlessness prevails.*

You may begin by reminding them of the lawless times in the wilderness when the people were not willing to be subject to God's Law, and rebelled against God and Moses, and murmured. They were times when serious sins were committed and when the whole future of Israel was endangered.

Thus, you can point out that the time of the judges typifies the era of lawlessness, whenever it occurs in any church or denomination.

The times after Solomon's chaotic reign in Israel were similarly lawless times, when, for a long time, the Law of God was ignored and lawlessness and disorder prevailed.

It was the same in the last days of the kingdom of Judah, after the time of Josiah, when a series of wicked kings reigned until God carried away the people into captivity. It was a lawless time, when false prophets and false priests prevailed and led the people against God and against one another.

We can assume, also, that after the lawless days that began in Malachi's time, Israel was thrust once more into a dark ages that lasted until Christ came.

We see hints of the same thing developing at the close of New Testament history when the churches in Asia Minor were showing signs of becoming lawless, having laid aside the will of God.

Help the class to understand that God has shown us here that whenever the church seeks to live without respect for the Law of God, inevitably, a lawlessness will emerge.

Point Two: *When men disregard God's Law, idolatry prevails.*

You could call to their attention the idols developed in the wilderness, such as the time of the Golden Calf, when the people grew weary of God's Law and, therefore, of God's leader, Moses, and turned to the idols they had known in Egypt.

Thus, the idolatry that emerged in the time of the judges, such as in the days of Gideon and in the time of Micah, is symptomatic of the phenomenon that prevails whenever God's people lay aside His Law. In disregarding the Law of God, men disregard God and idolatry is bound

to occur in their hearts.

This is seen also in the writings of many of the prophets, such as Amos, who cried out against the idols of Israel in his day. It occurred in the time of Manasseh, one of the latter kings of Judah, who brought idolatry into Judah in a time of lawlessness.

Show that it is quite significant that John, the Apostle, at the end of his first epistle warns the readers to guard themselves from idols. He recognized that the trends of his day of departure from obedience to God's will would bring on times of idolatry.

Help the class to see that we do not need little stone or metal idols on our table to be committing idolatry. Idolatry is any devotion to anything above our devotion to God.

Point Three: *When men disregard God's Law, hate prevails.*

Here you can use many examples from the Scripture. You can point to the hate of Koran, the priest, against Moses in the wilderness, when he was lawless; or the hate of Abimelech against his brothers in the lawless days of the judges.

You may also wish to point to Saul's hate of David at a later time, or the hate of Jeroboam toward Rehoboam and David's seed at the time of the division of the kingdom.

Jezebel's hate of Naboth and her subsequent plot to kill him and take his land is reflective of the lawless age of Ahab and Jezebel in the time of the prophet Elijah.

There are many instances of the hate of the false prophets toward the true prophets of God in lawless eras when false prophets prevailed. You could use as examples the hate against the prophet Amos, and against the prophet Jeremiah, which brought persecution to these two men of God.

In the New Testament we note the hate of the Pharisees for Jesus in their lawless attitude. They were men who had twisted God's Law and made it of no effect in their life or the lives of those they taught.

Finally, Paul warns over and over against the false preachers of his day who hate Christ and hate the faithful servant of God and fight against him.

In this point you will want to help the people to see that hate prevails because men do not love God's Word; and, therefore, they cannot love God or one another either. But hate does not necessarily mean strong feelings of animosity toward another, it may manifest itself simply as indifference toward the needs of others.

Point Four *When men disregard God's Law, heartbreak prevails.*

You may wish to mention the many times of heartbreak for Moses in the wilderness when the Israelites were lawless and rebellious against God.

You can likewise take note of the heartbreak about which we have just studied during Israel's period of the judges.

Later, you can mention the heartbreak of David over

his own sin and lawlessness, which brought further heartbreak on Israel both during and after David's time.

The heartbreak of Habakkuk over the lawless conditions in his day is a good example. This faithful prophet grieved over the prevalence of lawlessness and injustice, just before the time of the fall of Jerusalem.

Of course, in the New Testament, we remember, particularly, the heartbreak of Peter when he was faced with his own lawlessness that caused him to act in a manner unloving towards his Lord.

Here you will wish to stress to your class that while lawlessness produces heartbreak, a broken heart and a heart that is contrite before God is the beginning of the recovery both from the heartbreak and from lawlessness. God has to bring us to a broken heart before He will begin to heal a disobedient church.

Suggestions for discussion

I would suggest that you lead the class to examine your church's attitude towards God's Law. Help them to consider the matter of whether or not there is any evidence of lawlessness or indifference to God's commandments within the church. Here you could utilize questions 1-4.

Again, you could help them to see whether lawlessness or an indifference to God's Law has led the church, in any way, toward idolatry or putting other things before the will of God. Here make use of question 5.

Again, you may help them to determine whether hate or simply a lack of love among themselves may result from an indifference to God's clear commandments. Here question 6 could be helpful.

Finally, help them to discern whether there is evident heartbreak experienced in the church because of the departure from the Law of God. And if that prevails, how that heartbreak can be used as a means of the beginning of the healing of the church and its attitude toward God's Law. Here question 7 could be helpful.

LESSON ELEVEN

Introduction to the Lesson

Call to the attention of the class that this Book of Ruth is indeed about Naomi and about her faith and what God can do through one committed life. Remind them that this lesson and the one to follow on Hannah and Elkanah are similar lessons in that they show God's working in the period of the judges. Though the people themselves, as a whole, seemed to have given up, God did not desert them.

Point out that through this and the following lesson we can learn a great deal about how we ought to face times that are bleak spiritually in the church, and learn how God can use one individual life that is committed to Him to be a future blessing to all of God's people,

Point One: *God expects His children to live by their faith in times of spiritual decay.*

You may begin by pointing out God's exhortation to Abraham in a time of great discouragement to him, when he had stepped erroneously away from God's will for a time. In Genesis 17:1, we see that the Lord called him right back to that walk in faith.

Remind the class that Job is a great example of one of God's children who had to live by his faith when everything that he saw around him seemed to be decaying and failing. Even his wife and his friends discouraged him and urged him to give up, but Job would not give up his faith. He held on tenaciously to what he believed about God in spite of all that he could see around him.

The psalmist frequently deals with this theme. You may wish to refer to or even read parts of Psalms 37 and 73, which talk about the righteous in times of difficulty, when his eyes seem to tell him that the wicked prosper, and yet he knows better.

Habakkuk, the prophet, is a classic example of God's child seeing a desperate situation in his day and being all but overcome by the discouragement around him, as the wicked seemed to prosper and the righteous to suffer. Yet, God's answer in Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous shall live by faith," is the answer that God requires of all of His own when things seem to be going contrary to his faith.

Jesus, likewise, in the Sermon on the Mount, makes frequent reference to the necessity for God's children to live by faith and to trust in God, though all around them it seems that righteousness is suffering.

You may wish to remind them, too, of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:7, where he exhorts the Christians to understand their walk to be not by sight but by faith. We are guided by faith in God's Word, not by what seems to be happening around us.

Show the class the importance of this lesson for us today. We live in a time when there seems to be much discouraging news all around us about the world in which we live and about the church and its effectiveness in the world. It is not a time for despair or giving up; it is a time to learn to study God's Word and obey that Word in spite of all that is happening around.

Point Two: *God expects His children to praise Him in times of hardship.*

You may begin this point by reminding them of how Jacob, at a time when he was faced by enemies before him and behind him and seemed to be at a point of no return, nevertheless, could muster strength to praise God and give all glory to Him.

Joseph is another example. Though Joseph was cast into prison after having been sold by his brothers into slavery and faced the false accusations of those who had charge of him, nevertheless, in prison he did not cease to praise his God.

David is another splendid example. We remember that when he was in retreat from Saul, he continually gave glory to God. Later, when he was forced out of Jerusalem

by his son, Absalom, again, he would only praise God and give Him glory, not feeling sorry for himself.

The prophets frequently praised God in the midst of great suffering and hardship. And even after they had prophesied of terrible judgments to come, they could muster praise and thanksgiving to God for sustaining them and the remnant of His people. Habakkuk chapter 3, is an excellent example of how one prophet praised God even in the face of great losses and great setbacks for the church of his day.

Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi (Acts 16) is an excellent New Testament example of this commitment of praise to God under distressing circumstances while they were in prison facing uncertainty about the days to come. They could, nevertheless, sing hymns to God's glory.

Stress to the class the importance of the members learning to praise God in the midst of hardship. Such praise and thanksgiving can have tremendous impact on those around who see their difficulties and their hardships, but also see in them a spirit of faith that will not cease to thank and praise God.

Point Three: *God rewards those who are faithful by using them to bless other lives.*

Show how Naomi, in her life, though it was a life insignificant in the eyes of men, proved to be a blessing to all of God's people in years to come. You can point out how the Book of Ruth tells of three lives, that of Naomi, Boaz and Ruth, lives that would not be judged by men to be great and important but yet, lives which were blessed because they were faithful to God. Their blessings, however, were not simply for themselves, but for the people of God for all time.

You may mention Elijah, who was at one point greatly discouraged and yet who proved to be faithful to God and continued to obey God in the face of great opposition to him. At one time he felt that he was all alone, but by his one solitary life, God blessed the church of the future.

Jeremiah, likewise, saw nothing but sorrow through most of his life. Yet, what God spoke through him to the church has proved to be blessings for the church ever since.

Daniel, held as a captive in Babylon, was raised up to serve God's people. The life he lived and his bravery in the face of all kinds of trials proved to have tremendous effect upon the people of God in exile and strengthened those who returned to Jerusalem later to live.

Stephen, in the New Testament, who lived a relatively short life and who died a young man, stoned to death for his faith, nevertheless, proved in the end to be a rich blessing to the church. It is very likely that Paul was greatly affected by having seen the death of Stephen and that God, at that point, may have begun to turn his heart. Later in his life he testified that he could still remember vividly God's servant, Stephen, who died.

Help the class members to see that each individual

there has a potential for being a mighty blessing in the church, If they will be surrendered to God to walk by faith in accord with God's Word, even when others do not, and will continue to praise and glorify God, even in times of hardship and trial, they can be useful instruments in God's hands.

Suggestions for discussion

You may wish to lead the class in a discussion of what individual members of that class can do with their lives that will be a further blessing to that particular church. Here you can use questions 1,3,6 and 8 in the discussion.

You may also wish to lead the class to discuss the effects of our walking by faith when others around us do not, and of our praising God in the face of great trials which we may individually have to endure. Here you can utilize questions 2, 4, 5 and 7,

LESSON TWELVE

Introduction to the Lesson

Help the class to see that the focus of this lesson is upon one family, just as the last lesson was particularly focused on one individual believer in God.

Here we see Elkanah, the head of a household, faithfully lead the house to honor God, setting the example himself, both in obedience to God's Law and in the showing forth of love toward the members of his family.

Remind them that Elkanah is an exception in this time of the judges. He was different from most, as we have seen them in the Book of Judges. Much of Hannah's faith can be attributed to the devout family of which she was a member. All of this should be stressed as exemplifying the importance of homes where faith in God prevails.

Help them to see, also, that it was through families like Elkanah's family and through individuals like Naomi that God was working in that period of the judges to bring the people out of the darkness of that day to a new hope. A new day was dawning for Israel and the message of these last two lessons, which we have studied, indicate that to us.

Point One: *True faith is directed toward a God of knowledge.*

Remind them that most of Israel had gone after the dumb idols of the pagans among whom they lived. The dumb idols could not speak; they had no knowledge. Hannah, on the other hand, recognized her God as a God who knew her and knew her needs.

Remind them that God Himself had initially said to Abraham that He knew him (Gen. 18:19) and God's knowledge of Abraham was the whole basis of His calling Abraham.

You could point to the fact that God knew Jacob and made Himself known to him in flight and showed him, at the end of a twenty-year struggle, that his wrestling had

been with God all along.

You could point to such Scriptures as Deuteronomy 34:10, which show God's intimate and close knowledge of and relationship to Moses.

It is for that reason that Hannah prayed to a *knowing God*, assured that He knew her needs and He knew what to do for her.

Psalms 1 reminds us that God *knows* the way of all the righteous; and Jeremiah 23:24, likewise speaks of the knowledge of God.

In the New Testament, Jesus teaches His disciples to pray on the basis that God already knows everything they need, so that their prayer is not for the purpose of informing God. Obviously, its purpose is to glorify God and to show their recognition of their dependence on Him in all things. Romans 11:33ff. is a beautiful statement of the knowledge of God which far exceeds all human knowledge.

In this point emphasize to the class that they must learn to pray as Hannah did, assured that God already knows all of their needs. He knows their hearts and He knows what they need and how to meet that need.

Point Two: *True faith is directed toward a God of power.*

Here again, you will want to contrast Hannah's true faith in the power of God to do something about her need with the vain faith in the idols of the pagans around that were helpless to do anything for Israel. Remember that at one point in the period of the judges God had said, Since you will not honor Me, go to your idols and ask them to help you. Hannah knew that all help came from one God alone, Who was powerful.

Remind them that God had shown His power through the many miracles He performed for them, especially the crossing of the Red Sea and the overthrow of the armies of pharaoh, and later the crossing of the Jordan.

Stress that Hannah knew God was able to do all that she asked Him to do. She turned to the One who could help her.

You may wish to mention Elijah at Mt. Carmel, when he had the contest with the pagan worshippers of Baal. He challenged them to ask their god to show his power. Of course, Baal could not. He was a dumb and helpless god. So Elijah prayed to His God that day and the Living God showed His power.

In the New Testament, you can remind them of Christ's words that all power in heaven and earth were given unto Him as He commissioned His church to go out. We can see that the power of God is already poised and ready in our work of ministering in His Name. Help them to see, too, that in Romans 1:16, Paul speaks of the power of the gospel unto salvation.

Let the class, then, learn to trust in God's power in their lives and let them reflect on the evidence of that power *already* in their lives.

Point Three: *True faith is directed toward a God Who is able to save.*

Show them that this was the lesson of the Exodus. The people were helplessly bound in servitude to Egypt, and God entered with His great power and saved them out of the hands of their enemies, Show that God had promised from the beginning, as in Genesis 3:15, that the power for their salvation must come from Him and that He was determined to be their Savior.

You can point out that in the period of the judges it was just this lesson that God taught them over and over as the people got themselves into trouble from which they could not extricate themselves.

Time and again they had to look to God to save them from the hands of their enemies.

For this reason, we have Hannah's confidence in God expressed in her prayer. She was sure that He was able to save both her and her son and to keep both her and her son safe.

It is Isaiah, among the prophets, who chiefly proclaims God as Savior, though all the other prophets point to the same truth.

Psalms 23 is a beautiful expression by the psalmist of God's power to save His own and of His personal concern for each one.

The New Testament breaks forth with the grand message that Christ is the Savior God come in the flesh. And in Hebrews 7:25, Christ is proclaimed as the One who is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God through Him.

Help the class to see that faith in God as Savior is basic to all other faith, and that without that faith, there is no true faith.

Suggestions for discussion

You may wish to lead the class in discussion of the meaning of faith as exemplified in Hannah's life and testimony: faith in God's knowledge, faith in God's power and faith in God's salvation.

You may also wish to lead the class in a discussion of the importance of family devotions as is exemplified in the life of Elkanah and his family. Here you could use questions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7.

LESSON THIRTEEN

A Review Lesson

Part I, the test, may be done at home, or in the class individually or together. If the class is not disposed to do it at all, this entire part may be omitted; however, it is an excellent opportunity for the class to review what has been covered and to see whether they have grasped some of the significant truths in this quarter of study. You, as the teacher, ought to encourage all to test their progress. Working together in the classroom may be a good way to handle this, to encourage the others. If tests are taken

individually, it is best not to make the results known publicly.

The questions have been arranged so that the pupils

may check the answers in the lessons. Questions are by the lessons, for easier reference.

Below, you will find the answers to the questions.

1. T	21. F	41. F	61. F	81. T
2. T	22. T	42. F	62. F	82. F
3. F	23. T	43. F	63. F	83. F
4. T	24. T	44. T	64. F	84. F
5. T	25. F	45. F	65. T	85. T
6. F	26. T	46. F	66. F	86. F
7. F	27. F	47. T	67. T	87. F
8. F	28. T	48. F	68. T	88. F
9. F	29. F	49. T	69. T	89. F
10. F	30. T	50. F	70. T	90. F
11. T	31. T	51. T	71. T	91. T
12. F	32. T	52. F	72. T	92. T
13. T	33. F	53. F	73. F	93. F
14. F	34. F	54. T	74. T	94. F
15. F	35. T	55. F	75. T	95. F
16. F	36. T	56. F	76. T	96. T
17. F	37. F	57. F	77. F	97. F
18. T	38. F	58. T	78. F	98. T
19. T	39. F	59. T	79. F	99. T
20. T	40. T	60. T	80. F	100. F

Part II, the review of the quarter on the basis of Ephesians 1:4, ought not to be omitted; and if there is not time in class, because of the test, to go over this content, then urge the class to read and reflect on what is summarized in this section at home. It may be useful simply to read these paragraphs in class and have discussion of them afterwards.